

# THE EUGENICS REVIEW

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*Editorial Offices: The Eugenics Society, 20 Grosvenor Gardens, London, S.W.1. Editor for the Society—Eldon Moore.*

"Eugenics is the study of agencies under social control that may improve or impair the racial qualities of future generations, either physically or mentally."

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## NOTES OF THE QUARTER

AS most readers now know from the daily Press, the *Eugenics Society* has been left a large sum of money by the late Henry Twitchin, who for several years before his death had financed the *Society* to the extent of £1,000 a year. The value of the bequest, which has been considerably exaggerated in the Press, has not yet been definitely ascertained, but it seems probable that it will be between £70,000 and £80,000. As Major Darwin indicates in his memoir (on p. 91) on Mr. Twitchin, this will be treated as capital and the interest on it devoted mainly, if not entirely, to the educative activities of the *Society*. The Officers and Council are still considering what well-planned enlargement of this side of the *Society's* work will bring in the best results. Meanwhile, lest readers should be hypnotized by the size of the sum into deeming the *Society* well endowed in perpetuity, it would be as well to remind them that the utmost possible increase of the *Society's* revenue from this source cannot be more than £3,000 a year—which, welcome as it is, especially with the security of the capital it represents, will not go very far towards educating the public in the elements of eugenics. We are by no means wealthy yet. Moreover, the growth in pure propa-

ganda must inevitably throw into the shade our other and equally important work of research; and we are therefore hoping that to keep the balance true, the Twitchin bequest will be followed by an equal endowment for the promotion of purely scientific eugenics.



The announcement of the bequest prompted the *Daily Mail*, which has hitherto given valuable support to the campaign for restricting the breeding of aments, to a rather old-fashioned dissertation on eugenics:

"A horse-breeder wants to produce speed; a cattle-breeder beef and milk. . . . But with mankind we all differ about what is the ideal. One of us would breed Einsteins, another Shakespeares, a third Hobbse. . . . The eugenist will not get the free hand he wants till he has settled this primary obstacle of the intractable variety of human tastes."

It is interesting that this view is usually adopted by the very people who ardently promote infant welfare movements, physical culture in the schools, and similar efforts to improve the population, without ever realizing that the contribution of eugenics is simply to make these efforts more effective. In truth, there is far less division of thought, either among eugenists or the ordinary public, than the quoted paragraph implies, since few of us are seriously concerned about the nation's production of Shakespeares, while we are all united in the common ideal of more health and mental fitness. The motto of the eugenist, as of the ordinary man, is "Look after the mean; and the peaks will look after themselves."

Indeed, we would remind our contemporary, which has long expressed its concern for British agriculture, that the main ob-

stacle to the progress of the live-stock industry is not the difficulty of developing better types of domestic animals, but simply that of persuading the farmer to eliminate the poor ram and the ' scrub ' boar or bull. We shall be more than content if our friends on the Press will assist in our campaign against the human ' scrub,' while cheerfully leaving to our remote descendants the choice between Einsteins and Shakespeares.



A petition signed by seventy Members of Parliament of all parties has been made to the Prime Minister, asking that facilities should be given for passing the Matrimonial Causes Bill, which would make certified insanity for five years a ground for divorce. While this is one of the minor reforms that have, for obvious reasons of humanity, been long overdue, the main plea advanced by the petitioners is of greater interest to eugenists—" In view of the increasing insanity and mental deficiency in the country it is eminently desirable that sane spouses should have the right to determine whether their marriages should continue after five years of certified insanity."

The eugenic wisdom or otherwise of individual marriages can only form a very small part—for a long time to come, at least—of that larger scheme of racial reform which is becoming so urgently necessary; and this petition is important not directly, but indirectly, in the evidence it gives of a change of heart among our legislators and of a growing recognition of the part played by heredity in our individual and social affairs. Like Mr. Winston Churchill's famous defence of further rebates off the income-tax for children—" to encourage the producer"—it shows that even Parliament believes in the Safeguarding of human Industries.

The signatories included fifty Labour members, ten Conservative, and ten Liberal—from which one can infer, after making due allowance for the numerical proportions of the parties, that Liberals have

the most concern for eugenics, Socialists next, and Conservatives least.



There are two deliberate challenges to contemporary eugenic thought in Dr. Schiller's article on page 103. He first of all states that negative eugenics can only prevent racial deterioration and is " powerless to *improve* the human race "; though the general opinion of biologists is that a succession of negative measures would actually produce progressive improvement. He next suggests that the ' carrier ' of a latent defect should choose a normal spouse and avoid mating into a family of similar type. This is highly unorthodox, and there can scarcely be any doubt that, from the point of view of society as a whole, such ' carriers ' should mate with each other, if at all, and at any cost be prevented from tainting the normal families of the nation. But Dr. Schiller deliberately expresses his heresy in order to provoke discussion, his own view being that in certain circumstances it would be worth while risking the dissemination of defect in order to perpetuate other and valuable qualities of a particular individual or family. Would it?



It has recently been announced that the London School of Economics will shortly publish a " New Survey of London Life and Labour." It will be a record of two years' exact sociological research in London on the lines of Charles Booth's famous survey, with which it will be directly comparable, and it will be followed by a further inquiry, significant of our times, into the Use of Leisure. While the actual study of racial aspects could scarcely have been included, this new survey will undoubtedly throw much light on many matters of eugenic importance, besides giving that solid sociological background which is so essential to an accurate view of the problems of pauperism and dependency. The Survey is to be published (by P. S. King

and Son) in eight volumes, the first of which will be issued in September.



"The I.L.P. is now committed to birth prevention—committed definitely, deeply, and, apparently, irretrievably. . . ."

"The time has come when Catholics must cut clear from the I.L.P. . . ."

The quotation is taken from the *Catholic News* and, if the first sentence is a correct interpretation of the Independent Labour Party's conference at Birmingham, it is remarkably good news. This *Society* is by no means wedded to a policy of public birth control, but it is deeply concerned that a matter of such importance should be lifted out of the arena of religious and party controversy. It should be a non-party subject, like public health, to be discussed on its own merits; and so it will be as soon as one Party has the courage to take the lead, since the others will assuredly follow.



Dr. Sorsby's study of cancer in Jews and non-Jews (appearing on p. 99) tends to confirm the big investigation which was made some years ago under the auspices of the League of Nations, into the incidence of cancer among the races of Europe: generally, the difference between race and race was found to be small. It should not be inferred, however, that there is therefore no genetic factor of importance in the causation of cancer. On the contrary, quite apart from such biological evidence as exists—especially the now famous work of Dr. Slye—there is good reason to believe that in humans high resistance and high susceptibility to the disease are both markedly inherited. But it would seem that the fate of most of us, in whom there is no strong genetic predisposition one way or the other, is likely to be decided by the lives we lead. That several races should exhibit approximately the same incidence of cancer, in no way invalidates a genetic hypothesis: on the contrary, it strongly suggests that cancerous tendencies, like stature and intelli-

gence, are determined and distributed among all mankind according to some genetical principle. It would be marked differences between two or more groups of people that would suggest a purely environmental cause of the disease—our own immunity from cholera, for instance, in contrast with the susceptibility of Indians, or our present freedom from the typhus which committed such ravages among our recent ancestors.

Dr. Sorsby's study also provides a further example of the fact, now more and more widely recognized, that the characteristics of race among mankind, as of breed among animals, are of less essential importance than the differences which distinguish one strain from another within a race. There is little to choose between a good Ayrshire and a good milking Shorthorn, but a world of difference between high and low-yielding individuals of either breed. *Mutatis mutandis*, the same is true of men, where family counts for more than race.



Two rather extreme instances of the social consequences of mental unfitness have recently caused public comment. Judge Sturges, addressing the Grand Jury at Hertfordshire Assizes, pointed out that of twenty-nine persons for trial, all but two belonged "to the physically or mentally unfit class." And at Halifax Town Council it was announced that one mentally defective man was the father of twenty mentally defective children.



Following on the resolution of the Denbighshire County Council in favour of sterilization, the Visiting Committee of the Leicestershire and Rutland Mental Hospital has sent the following resolution to the Leicestershire County Council:

"That in the opinion of this Visiting Committee, the practice of the voluntary sterilization of suitable cases of the mentally unfit would (a) gradually pre-

vent the production of progeny from the worst stocks; (b) gradually reduce the numbers of mentally deficient persons requiring superintendence and education; (c) by such reduction in numbers minimize the expense to ratepayers and taxpayers of the upkeep of Mental Hospitals and Institutions for the mentally deficient, and the Visiting Committee therefore requests the Minister of Health to take such steps as will enable Local Authorities to bring a system of voluntary sterilization into operation. Also that the two County Councils be requested to associate themselves with this resolution, and forward same to the County Councils' Association."

While local and mental welfare authorities everywhere are taking a growing interest in this subject—scarcely a day passes without newspaper reports of this character reaching this office—we believe that this is the first instance of such a committee passing a definite resolution in favour of sterilization. The County Councils' Association mentioned—a powerful and representative body—has asked the Government for a full inquiry into the cause and cure of amentia; and just recently the responsible committee at Wolverhampton have passed

a similar resolution, while at the same time advocating immediate legislation to allow of voluntary sterilization at the expense of the community.

A further result of the Denbighshire resolution was the request of the Lancashire Asylums Board to their chief medical officer, Dr. F. A. Gill, to prepare a report on the subject. This he has recently done, summing up: "Sterilization of either sex is a safe and efficient operation, but a policy of wholesale sterilization of either sex is neither necessary nor desirable," though "there seems to be an excellent case for the sterilization of selected cases."

The Leeds Voluntary Mental Case Committee has also passed a resolution calling for legislation to prevent the marriage of aments.



It is without political prejudice that we record the remark of Mr. S. Samuel, M.P., at a recent luncheon. He apologized for his obvious tiredness by saying that he had been in the House until five o'clock that morning. "The debate was on mental deficiency," he added. "Needless to say, the Government had a large majority."